Advent 2025: Make a Way

This year for Advent, Pastor Joel (and Dr. Gail Doornbos, who will join us on Advent 1) will preach from the book of Isaiah. Together with our singing, praying, and reading of God's word, we will explore the idea that, while God has already made a way for us in Jesus to new life and the new creation, we still walk through times of wilderness and valley, longing for God to make a way there. We will hold on to this tension: Christ has made a way, Christ continues to make a way. One thing you will notice connected to this theme is that we will light the Christ candle each Sunday of Advent along side the Advent candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, to remind ourselves that Christ Jesus, Emmanuel—God with us—is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The series comes to us from Katie Roelofs, formerly of CRC Worship Ministries, now of Lamppost Consultants. And you might see some lanterns in our sanctuary.

A few other things to note about Advent. First: this year our Sunday School Christmas program will be held in the morning of December 14, the 3rd Sunday of Advent—Joy Sunday! How fitting to have our elementary school children lead us in worship. It will feel very much like a typical morning service–with a sermon and communion—but the children will be present in many of the elements of our worship. Then in the evening of December 14, we invite you all to the B.J. Haan Auditorium for a Christmas Cantata called *The Winter Rose* directed by Dr. Ryan Smit, accompanied by an orchestra and sung by singers from the Sioux Center Christian Reformed Churches and beyond. They have been hard at work since October and it promises to be a beautiful evening. An offering will be taken for the Hope Food Pantry. The service starts at 6:00 PM.

On December 21 at 6:00 PM, we will hold our annual Candlelight service. There will be time in this service both to acknowledge the "blueness" of the Christmas season for some and also the brightness of the incarnation which was for us all. And, as always, we will end by singing "Silent Night" and "Peace, Peace" in a candle-lit circle around the sanctuary.

So, with all of this, we invite you to a time of waiting for, longing for, hoping for, and worshipping Christ, the newborn King.

-Rebecca DeVries

Courier December 2025
COVENANT CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

From the Council...

Covenant's been busy this fall. We are thankful for each of you who are involved formally through committees, leadership, and worship, or informally by caring for others in your visits, transportation, mentoring, and care for those within and outside our congregation.

The search process revealed that we needed to immediately update our church website. Many changes have already been made, but the council also approved a 'refresh' of the entire website. A committee has been formed to guide this process.

This past month we met with Pastor Eddy Olguin and several other members of Amistad Cristiana. They are requesting both guidance relating to church governance and function and a revitalized connection between our congregations.

We also had a Zoom® discussion with Pastor Gianni Gracia of Vida y Esperanza CRC in Miami. He is interested in maintaining and growing our relationship with his congregation. He would welcome a service trip by either adults and/or young people.

The Executive Committee has been busy exploring how to maintain a vibrant ministry during the period we are without a lead pastor. We have contacted pastors and others to lead us by preaching including the services of Justin Bailey and Kyle Dieleman. We have also applied for classical supply and for a Summer in Service intern from Calvin Seminary. We are also exploring whether we should seek a short-term interim pastor.

One significant item that will be addressed during the next couple of months is the desire for and nature of an evening service.

Do you know Covenant has a mission statement? Do you know what it is? Simply put, it is a summary of the why, the who, and the how of Covenant. An updated mission statement as part of the church profile was developed for the pastoral search and was approved by the council. You can view the updated statement in our newest Covenant Directory (page 16).

On December 8, Covenant will hold a congregational meeting. A significant item on the agenda will be approving the Covenant 2026 budget. You'll have a chance to ask questions and provide suggestions as we move forward into a new year.

-Chris Goedhart

Mission Statement
Covenant CRC is a community of believers gathered through grace and called to a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18) that finds expression in our love for one another, for our community, and for the world. We proclaim the gospel as part of the worldwide church and our Reformed fellowship. With the Contemporary Testimony (Article 43), we proclaim,

Jesus Christ rules over all.
To follow this Lord is
to serve him wherever we are
without fitting in,
light in darkness,
salt in a spoiling world.

We pray and work as members of the kingdom of God—which is already among us.

Our life together is centered in our corporate worship, where in word and sacrament we are

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From the Council

(Continued from page 2)

nurtured into new life as God's people. It extends as well to our education and outreach programs, to the stewardship of our gifts and resources, and to our welcoming and inclusive fellowship.

Identity Statement

Covenant Christian Reformed stands in the historic tradition of Reformed churches, founded upon and committed to the belief that Christ is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all things (Colossians 1:15-20) and that the true meaning of our existence can be found only in a faithful response to his Word. As part of the Church universal—stretching over time and space—our primary calling is to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed. This gospel is the good news that though this world experiences the brokenness of sin in every area of life, healing and restoration arrives through Christ's redemptive work.

We want our church to exhibit these characteristics:

- Faithfulness to a biblical-reformational worldview so that our belief, worship, and daily lives demonstrate our collective certainty that the cosmos in its totality belongs to God. The Lord has taught us not to compartmentalize our lives into "sacred" and "secular" but rather to embrace with boldness our task of bringing healing to every area of life and to all creation.
- Biblically-grounded worship that responds to the variety of worship styles practiced in the diverse Body of Christ and is sensitive to our own traditions as well as to the needs of those outside the Body of Christ who long for meaning in their lives. Our liturgy deliberately seeks to evoke from the worshiper awe, repentance, wonder, praise, thanksgiving, and the desire to live in joyful obedience to God's Word, while resisting the self-serving spirits of the age.
- A love and unity characterized by Christ-like love and mutual accountability, a renunciation of individualism, and a willingness on the part of our members to use their gifts both locally and globally. Especially in divided times, we pray that our unity, respectful of diversity, will both draw us together and offer a witness to the world. Our unity is expressed in our rich fellowship and our care for members of all ages, including the youngest and most vulnerable.
- An active word/deed witness that is increasingly sensitive to the needs of our neighbors and of the creation. We seek to become increasingly generous and self-sacrificing to help meet those needs.
- Support for and promotion of other expressions of the Body of Christ including Christian organizations that promote justice, relieve the suffering of the impoverished, and support the flourishing of all humans, particularly those on the margins. This support extends to Christian education at every level.
- A place for the gathering of God's people that facilitates the proclamation of the Gospel in the geographic heart of the Sioux Center community, is attractive and welcoming to visitors, seekers, and members of the congregation, and is functional for a wide range of congregational and community activities.

With believers everywhere, we pray, worship, serve, and love as we long for, even as we labor for, the renewal and consummation of

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December Birthdays & Anniversaries

1 Lillia Britzman

2 Hugo Postma

6 Canaan Hawley
Nico Ribbens

7 Elia Eppinga

8 Jason Wyenberg

14 Megan Ribbens

16 Kathy De Wit

17 Nico DeVries
Lily Wyenberg

19 Shaun & Sarah Stiemsma

21 Ruth Clark
Ramiro Rangel
Gianni & Georgina Gracia
Micah & Shannon Schreurs

22 Shirley Matheis

23 Ryan & Val Zonnefeld

25 Betty Vander Plaats

26 Ken Matheis
Dennis Vander Plaats
Erika Ver Steeg

27 George & Jo Faber
Dave & Jeri Schelhaas

28 Thea Wyenberg
Joel & Tricia Kok

29 Emily Kramer
Jeff & Shirley Taylor
Josh & Carlene Van Schouwen

30 Micah Schreurs



A Few Building Use Reminders

We have been blessed with an old, beautiful, and sometimes slightly quirky building. As we seek to use it well, here are a few building use reminders:

- Planning on holding a meeting at church? Let the church office know! It's helpful to have all our meetings on the church calendar so we can avoid conflicts and so that our custodian knows when people will be in the building as she schedules her cleaning.
- Are you the last one in the building? Make sure the lights are off and the doors are closed and locked behind you. (And don't forget to check the bathroom lights!)
- If you're going out the main handicap-accessible doors, make sure they're closed well—sometimes the automatic door doesn't shut all the way on its own. (And if you don't want to wait for the door's slow closure, use the doors without the "Automatic Door" stickers.)
- If you use the combination to get in the northeast door, make sure the lock clicks in place when you leave the building! Occasionally when people use the combination and turn the knob, the lock doesn't pop back in place and the knob just needs a quick wiggle to make sure it locks. Listen for the click when you leave!

Thanks for your help in caring for and sharing our space well!

December Scheduling



Valet

Kurt Vos



Greeters

Faby A, Isabel C, Micah D



Ushers

Matt J, Jeff T, Jason VB,



Coffee Servers

Ruth C, Steve C, Kristi H,
Rachel L, Merrill MC

Substitutes

If you are unable to serve on your assigned date for coffee, usher, or greeter, contact:

Marge DB, Verlyn DW, Ron O,
Marty VP, Dani W, Laurey Z

Thanks for serving!

Courier Copy—It's up to you!

The *Courier* is issued monthly at Covenant church. If you have copy that you wish to be included, send it to the church office. Each issue is distributed on the last Sunday of the month. **Copy deadline** is Monday, **December 21** for the January issue. (Note the early holiday deadline.)



Nursery

Nursery Monitor: Jenni M

December 7
AM Andy & Rachel L, Jason & Sara H

December 14
AM Mark & Lisa C, Channon & Joni V

December 21
AM Ethan & Donna B, Marcy H

December 25—Christmas Day
AM Ron & Carol O, Jason & Dani W

December 28
AM Doug & Marge DB, Kris & Marty VP

January 4
AM Ryan & Val Z, Micah & Jayden D

Formation Sunday Evenings

Join us for our 6:00 PM Sunday evening gatherings this month:

December 7: Advent Hymn Sing

December 14: Community Christmas Cantata (at Dordt University)

December 21: Candlelight Service

December 28: No evening service

And not a Sunday, but worth noting:

December 31: New Year's Eve Worship

Note from the Deacons

Thank you to all the ministry leaders who have submitted updated estimates for next fiscal year. Your input is essential to building a thoughtful and realistic budget, and your timely responses have helped the deacons with our review process. We are nearing the end of the budget planning cycle and preparing a proposed budget that will be brought to the congregation for approval at our December 8 congregational meeting.

As we look over the early requests and current trends, a few themes have emerged. Our church building, one of the oldest in town, continues to bring rising maintenance and insurance costs. We also continue our strong commitment to Christian Education with the already-approved $126,000 funding for the current school year. In addition, we are exploring a possible increase to Missions funding. While that Missions increase is still under review, it is part of the broader conversations we are having about next year's priorities.

Please keep the Elders and Deacons in your prayers as we continue refining the budget. On December 8, we'll also share some high-level trend information and context before asking the congregation to approve the budget. Thank you for your patience, prayers, and continued support as we work through this important process.

-Josh Van Schouwen

For the Covenant Deacons
(Kyle Dieleman, Mark Horstman, Dave Kramer, Lee Mellema, Micah Schreurs, Atul Shinde, Josh Van Schouwen, Val Zonnefeld)

From the Council

(Continued from page 3)

all things. As *Our World Belongs to God* puts it in its final section (Article 58):

With the whole creation
we join the song:
"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"
He has made us a kingdom of priests
to serve our God,
and we will reign on earth.
God will be all in all,
righteousness and peace will flourish,
everything will be made new,
and every eye will see at last
that our world belongs to God.
Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus!

Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/25-11/16/25) $305,836	$292,777	-$13,059
Christian Education	(8/1/25-11/16/25) $38,923	$35,146	-$3,777
Refresh Building	(1/1/25-11/16/25) $65,815	$66,872	+$1,057

Pastoral Search Update...

The Pastoral Search Committee continues to meet biweekly, following the process laid out in the "More Than A Search Committee" resource, as mentioned in our previous update. We have made progress—as of November 17, we have successfully posted our job on the CRCNA Network's Church Jobs page. It includes a few paragraphs describing the position, our church, and our community. Under the job description, we attached Covenant's Mission and Identity Statement and the church profile compiled by our committee. We also linked the church website.

The website link leads directly to a new page on Covenant's website: our Pastoral Search page. This page includes much of the same information as our job listing on The Network, in addition to a link to Sioux Center's website. Our homepage now includes a notice about our open pastor position that links to the Pastoral Search page. This new page is part of our larger effort to fix up our website; there will be a more thorough update to Covenant's website soon, but for now we have corrected some inaccuracies so that prospective pastors can learn more about our church.

We are still waiting on access to PastorSearch, the database mentioned in our last update; we have sent our payment to them and are waiting on their processing. As soon as we have access, we will be able to look into your suggestions for potential candidates—we are pleased to say we have already had a few responses from the congregation! Thank you to those who have talked to committee members or filled out the green sheet in your church mailboxes. If you have a name to submit to the committee and have not already done so, please fill out the green sheet and put it in Sally Jongsma's mailbox or contact Sally directly at jongsma@mtcnet.net.

For the Search Committee,

-Jayden Dykstra



Congregational Meeting & Lasagna Dinner
Monday, December 8

On the agenda:

- We'll hear updates from the Council.
- We plan to vote on the 2026 budget.
- And let the Youth Group feed you before the meeting! No need to make dinner!

Christian Education Auction
Friday, February 20

Things to do to prepare:

- Practice your bidding skills—get those arms in shape to lift that number high!
- Think about things to offer for the auction. The more creative, the better!
- Save your money so you can use make good use of those bidding skills!



What a delight to shower Michael, Adeline, and little Josiah with love and gifts in October! And Josiah was quite cooperative and allowed some of the ladies to enjoy some quality baby snuggles throughout the evening!

From the Justice & Mercy Committee

Based on recent studies and expert analyses, continued deep cutbacks to USAID could result in more than 14 million additional preventable deaths globally by 2030, including over 4.5 million children under the age of five. These figures are projections from a comprehensive analysis published in the medical journal *The Lancet* in July 2025, which used statistical models to evaluate the impact of an estimated 83% cut to USAID programs. *The Lancet* is one of the world's oldest, best-known, and most prestigious weekly peer-reviewed general medical journals whose mission is to publish high-quality science with the purpose of advancing health worldwide and promoting social justice and health equity.

Here are a few ways the Justice and Mercy Committee encourages you to respond to the great need in our world this Thanksgiving and Christmas season:

- **Fill your Peter Fish!** Any money put in your Peter Fish will go to World Renew as they seek to address world hunger.
- **Check out World Renew's Gift Catalog** (worldrenew.net/gift-catalog) and consider buying some extra gifts this year! You can buy books, bicycles, bees, barnyard animals, and so much more to support families around the world achieve sustainable, healthy lives.